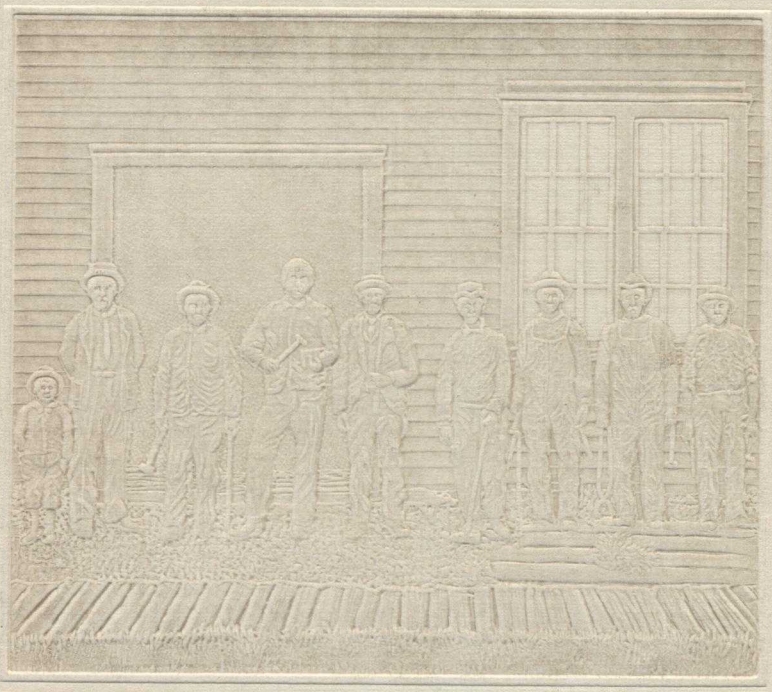
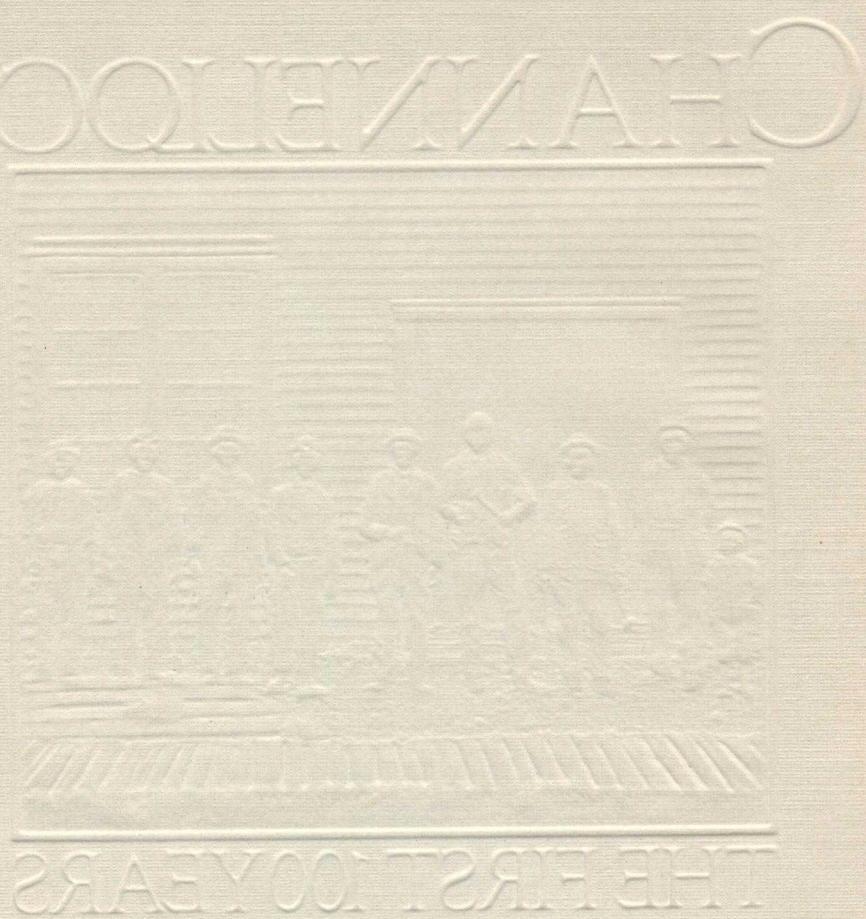
CHANNELLOCK



THE FIRST 100 YEARS



Front Cover:
Work force at original
Conneaut Lake plant
circa 1890.

THE PLIERS THAT WENT TO WAR

The letter came across Bill DeArment's desk in February 1954. Here's what he read:

33 Coltsfoot Road
Chantry Estates
Ipswich, England
February 16, 1954

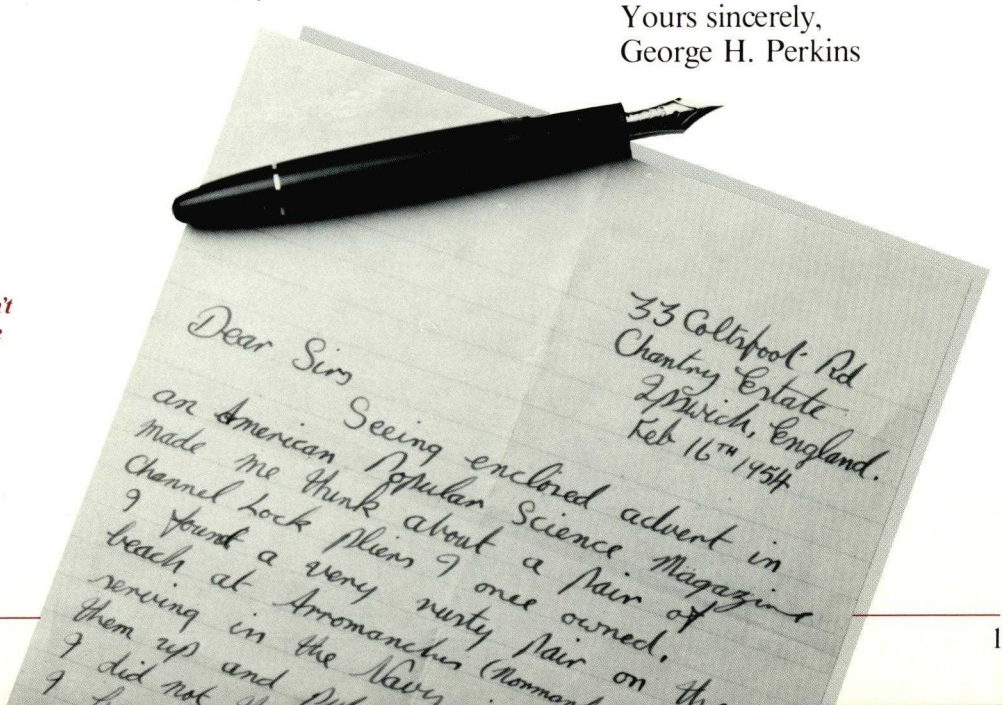
Dear Sirs:

Seeing enclosed advert in an American Popular Science magazine made me think about a pair of Channellock pliers I once owned.

I found a muddy pair on D + 1 on the beach at Arromanche (Normandy) while serving in the Navy in 1944. I cleaned them up and put them in my tool kit. I did not think much about them until I began to use them to get me out of several jams. I was amazed at the gripping power they had!

When I was demobbed, I brought them home and used them in my civvy employment for many years. One day I was called out to work on a broken down lorry loaded with about 9 tons of stuff. I had to jack it up but could not find the jack handle. So I grabbed my Channellock. It did the job fine, but a few days later I found they were finally broken. I have often tried to get another Channellock but haven't seen a pair since. There are plenty of tools that resemble them over here, but nothing quite like the little tool I found on the Normandy beach. When I saw your advert I felt I had to write and tell you about it.

Yours sincerely,
George H. Perkins


33 Coltsfoot Rd
Chantry Estate
Ipswich, England.
Feb 16TH 1954
Dear Sirs
Seeing enclosed advert in
an American Popular Science Magazine
made me think about a pair of
Channel Lock Pliers I once owned.
I found a very rusty pair on the
beach at Arromanches (Normandy)
serving in the Navy in 1944. I cleaned
them up and put them in my tool kit.
I did not think much about them

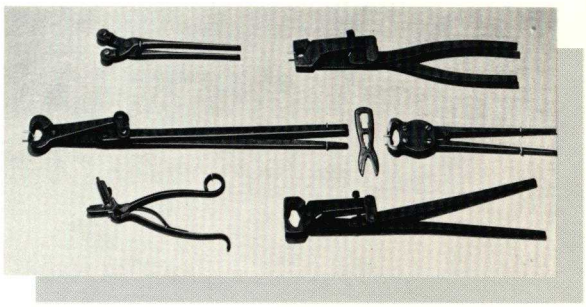
"I have often tried to get another Channellock but haven't seen a pair since. There are plenty of tools that resemble them . . . but nothing quite like the little tool I found on Normandy beach."

IT ALL BEGAN IN A BLACKSMITH SHOP

This little story of the Channellock pliers that went ashore in Normandy on D-Day had its genesis in a small blacksmith shop at Conneaut Lake near Meadville, Pennsylvania. There in 1886, 33 year old proprietor George DeArment, not content with the farriers tools then available, busied himself in his spare hours dreaming up better designed hoof parers and nippers. He hand carved wood models and, when satisfied after numerous refinements, he then hand forged prototypes. On-the-job testing satisfied him that his new creations were indeed better than the old. Confirmation soon came from neighboring blacksmiths who heard of George DeArment's new tools, tried them, and promptly ordered sets for their own use.

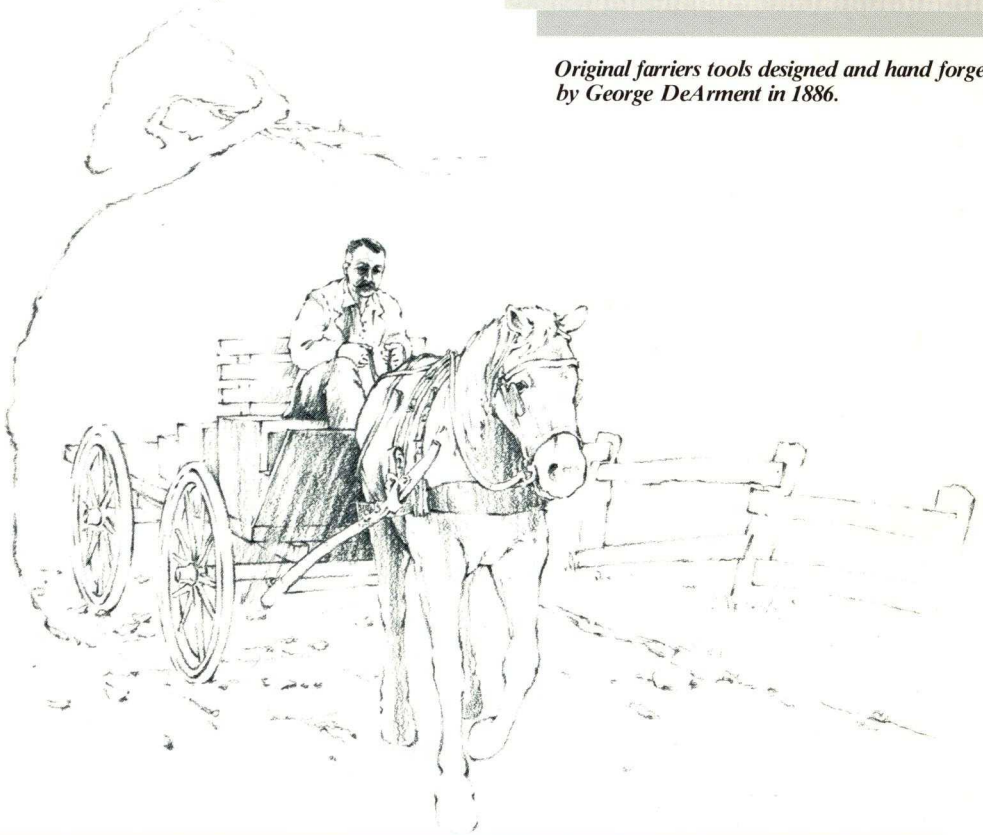
Thus was born a fledgling tool making enterprise, the offspring of a blacksmith's hankering to improve what he had.

At the outset, DeArment's production and sales methods were simple, direct, low cost, effective. Hand forge tools during the winter months. In spring, load up a wagon and peddle them from town to town until he was sold out. Then sell the horse and wagon and return home by train.



Original farriers tools designed and hand forged by George DeArment in 1886.

"Hand forge tools during the winter months. In spring, load up a wagon and peddle them from town to town until he was sold out. Then sell the horse and wagon and return home by train."



George B. DeArment (1853-1917) Founder

The work force circa 1906 included sons Howard and Almon DeArment, top row second and third from left. Building is the Meadville plant acquired in 1904.

The financial panic of 1891, while shortlived, was fierce, leaving behind it a massive wreckage of failed banks and ruined businesses. When the local bank went under, George DeArment's fledgling company suddenly was left without resources. Never a man to counsel with fear, much less surrender to it, DeArment gathered up the pieces and started anew under the name Champion Tool Company.

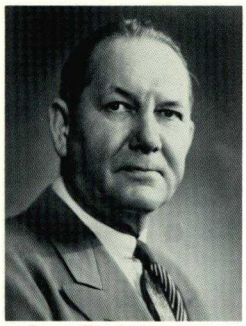
The creative talent that had launched the enterprise in 1886 was put to work with recharged intensity. Indeed, by the turn of the century, George DeArment was credited with having designed most of the farrier tools on the market. Little did he realize how far his good reputation had spread until, to his delighted surprise, he received an order in August, 1902, for a set of Champion tools for King Edward VII of England.

In 1904, DeArment moved his now thriving operation into the building once used as a freight house for the French Creek Feeder Canal in nearby Meadville. The product line was expanded to include a line of hammers. More manufacturing capacity called for more sales push, and so the company's first salesman was hired. His territory was America's industrial and agricultural heartland, the vast middle west.

A word about this salesman. He was a tall, erect, pipe smoking man of Dutch extraction, named Frank Grooss. His territory included Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, northern Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and eastern Kansas. Since the automobile was then hardly beyond the "one-lung" stage, the fledgling salesman's only means of covering this vast area was by train from his headquarters in Chicago. To do a thorough job — which his sales proved he did — Grooss rode the rails week-in, week-out, year after year. How he accomplished these time consuming travels and still managed to raise a family was a constant source of amazement to boss George DeArment back in Meadville.

"Little did he realize how far his good reputation had spread until, to his delighted surprise, he received an order in August 1902 for a set of Champion tools for King Edward VII of England."

Howard DeArment



Almon DeArment

A SECOND GENERATION COMES ABOARD

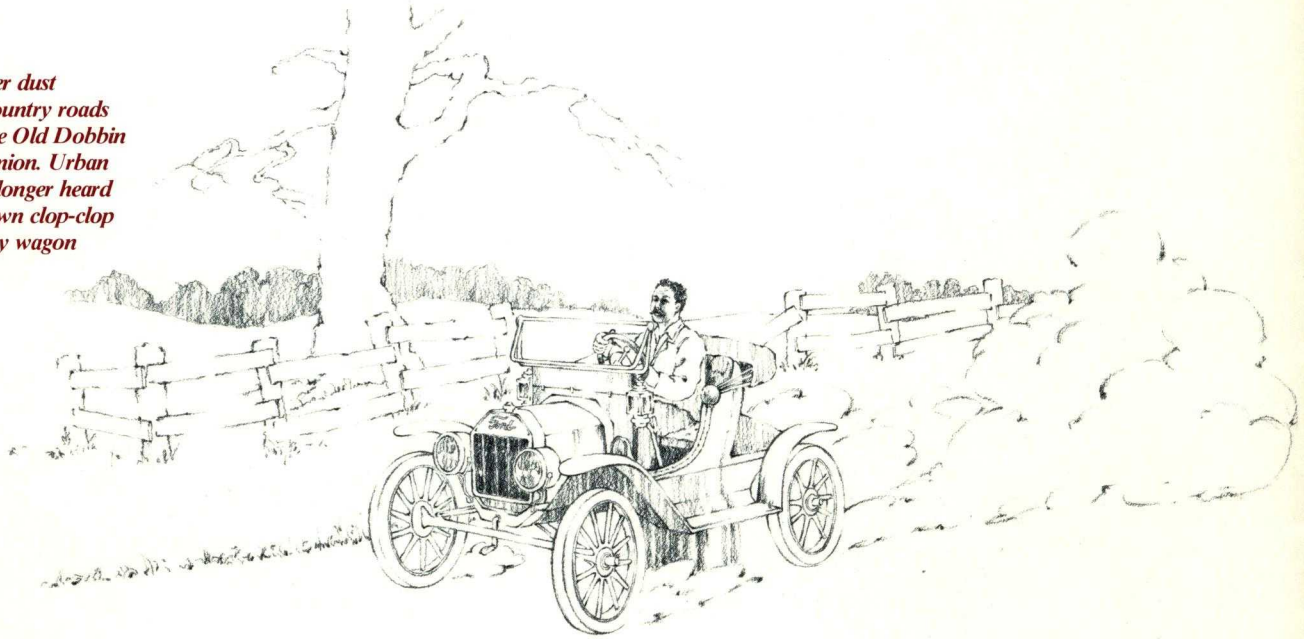
Shortly after the move to the Meadville plant, Howard and Almon DeArment joined father George in the shirt sleeves, hands-on operation of the company. Champion Tool Company continued to grow and by the time of America's entry into World War I had gained nationwide recognition as a leading manufacturer of farriers tools.

The end of World War I opened the door to vast changes in American life. The creeping transition from an agrarian to an industrial society suddenly accelerated from low gear to full speed ahead. The automobile led this race into industrial ascendancy, carrying in its wake a flood of satellite enterprises — rubber, steel, glass, fabrics, and paint among others. Submerged in the backwash, however, was the horse drawn vehicle. Flivver dust clouded country roads where once Old Dobbin held dominion. Urban streets no longer heard the pre-dawn clop-clop of the dairy wagon horse. And Champion Tool Company soon became painfully aware that the market for horseshoeing tools was shrinking.

SHRINKING MARKET— NEW OPPORTUNITY

Howard and Almon DeArment, in charge of the company after founder George's death in 1917, initiated two major decisions during the 'twenties. The first involved the company name. Champion was to companies what Smith was - and is - to families: a perfectly good name but hardly a distinctive one. To drop Champion for another name, however, meant the sacrifice of valuable market recognition and acceptance. A happy solution was hit upon. Just add the

"Flivver dust clouded country roads where once Old Dobbin held dominion. Urban streets no longer heard the pre-dawn clop-clop of the dairy wagon horse."



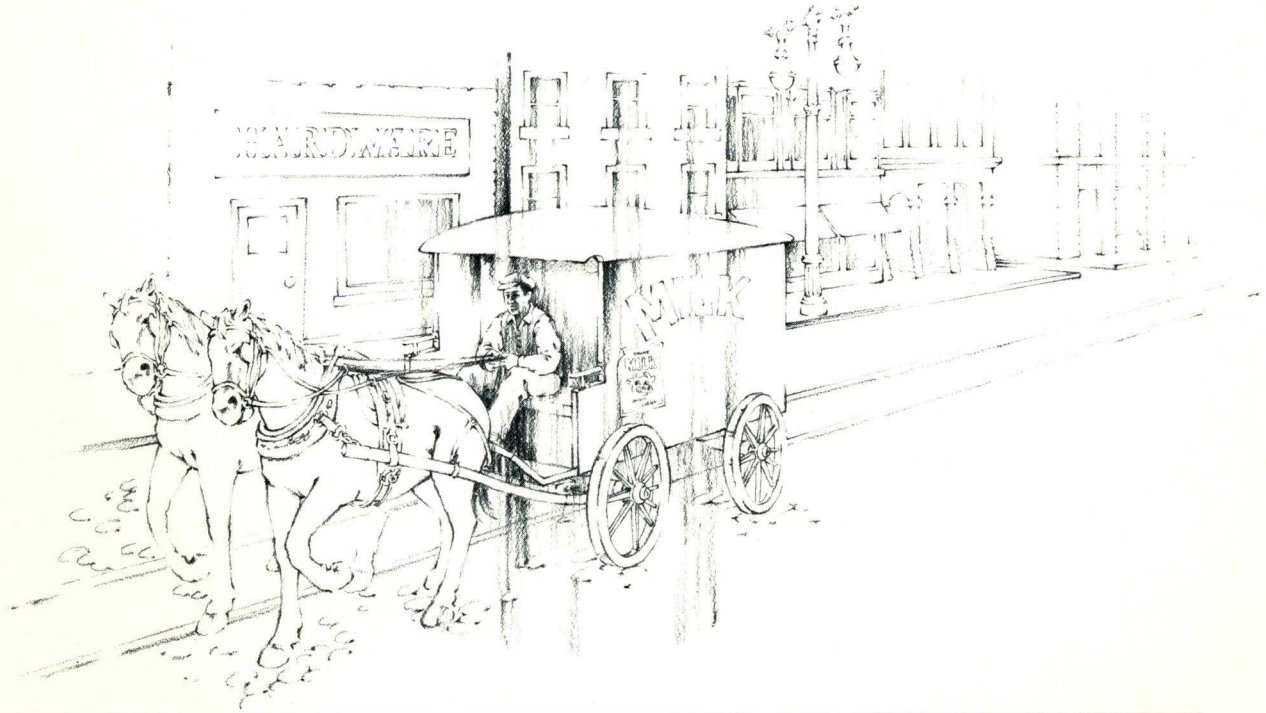
family name DeArment to Champion and voila!, a distinctive new name with no loss of market identity. And so Champion DeArment Tool Company came into being.

The second decision was to prove even more significant. The brothers decided to broaden their product base by adding a line of pliers. They were well aware that they were emerging into a highly competitive field. Tough competitors dominated the major markets - industrial, hardware, automotive, electrical, public utilities.

An entrepeneur aspiring to break into a market controlled by established suppliers can succeed only if he has a sizeable price advantage, a huge fund of advertising and sales promotion money, or an obviously better product.

The only one of these imperatives available to the brothers DeArment had to be a better product which, alas, they did not yet have. And so the engineering search for a new, superior plier was launched — a kind of genetic revival of the same impulse that had motivated father George back in 1886, some 40 years before.

Almon and Howard DeArment with young George and Bill circa 1923



The first of its kind - the original tongue and groove plier with its ten modern descendants in the background —

A REVOLUTIONARY NEW TOOL MAKES A BREAKTHROUGH

In 1933, chief engineer Howard Manning came up with a completely new concept in adjustable pliers — the tongue and groove plier which provided indisputable and obvious advantages. Jaw adjustments were more easily made. Once the user clamped the jaws onto a piece of work, he could squeeze as hard as he wanted without fear of slippage and cracked knuckles. This augmented gripping force in turn made possible tremendous leverage not hitherto available in an adjustable plier.

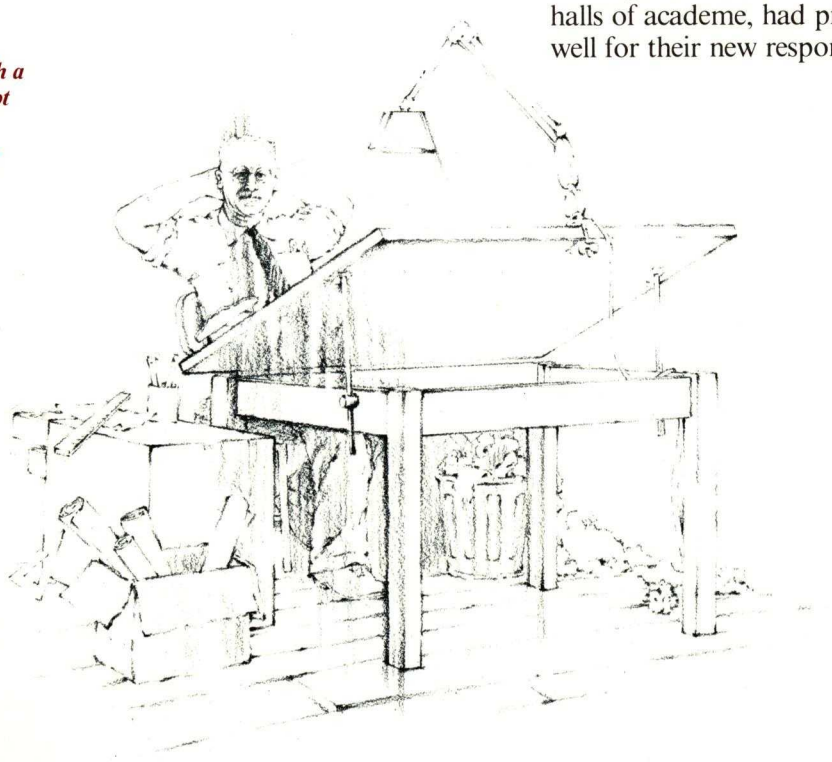
And so Champion DeArment Tool Company had the superior product needed to stake out a solid position in the plier market place. A patent was granted and a trade name as distinctive as the new plier was registered — a trade name now known 'round the world: Channellock.

TRADITION REJUVENATED

Tragically, Howard DeArment, the elder of founder George's two sons, had suffered a fatal heart attack in 1927 and thus was denied the opportunity of contributing to and sharing in the fruits of this entry into the plier market. Almon, the surviving brother, carried on the operation of the company.

During the mid and late 'thirties, Howard's sons, George and Bill DeArment, finished college and joined Uncle Al. They were not novices in the forging of hand tools. Like their father and uncle before them, they had worked in the plant during school vacations. This early training, not available in the ivied halls of academe, had prepared them well for their new responsibilities.

"In 1933, Chief Engineer Howard Manning came up with a completely new concept in adjustable pliers — the tongue and groove plier . . ."



THE WAR ENDS— A NEW ERA BEGINS

At the end of World War II, the company once again was confronted with the need for major shifts in product lines. With tool quality steel still in limited supply, Uncle Al and nephews George and Bill decided to shift product emphasis to pliers at the expense of hammers. For one thing, there were three times more hammer than plier producers banging heads for the available business. More important, the patented Channellock tongue and groove plier provided a powerful competitive weapon in that field.

Another, and even more far reaching, decision had to be made. Private label pliers and hammers for a national retail giant — a boon when the company was getting started in the plier business — now provided some 65% of the company's total sales. Such business is pleasant and easy. It assures dependable volume with practically none of the usual marketing expenses — catalogs, sales commissions, advertising, distributor incentives. It is also a time bomb waiting to blow a company out of existence when — not if — this dominant customer decides suddenly to change his source of supply.

A MARKETING TIME-BOMB IS DEFUSED

George and Bill DeArment, with approval of Uncle Al, decided to defuse this time bomb of dominant-customer dependency by strengthening their own franchise in the market place. New sales representatives were added to give the company aggressive nationwide coverage of hardware, industrial, automotive, and electrical distributors. And Champion DeArment embarked on a national advertising and promotional program designed to broaden and increase brand preference and market share, not only for their popular tongue-and-groove pliers, but as well for their top quality solid joint pliers and sundry tools. Postscript: When the national retail giant finally did cancel its business in 1983, its volume in units, although just about the same as 35 years before, constituted less than 4% of Channellock's total business. The time bomb had been defused.

"New sales representatives were added to give the company aggressive nationwide coverage of hardware, industrial, automotive, and electrical distributors."

POPULAR SCIENCE
Mar. 1948 · 25c
Can Happen to YOU!
PAGE 92
POPULAR SCIENCE
POPU MECHA
The plier design that OBSOLETES all others
THE NEW No. 420 CHAN NEL LOCK PLIER
Here's the new, improved Channellock Plier—bringing to you new features which offer more positive gripping, greater strength and longer wear. The undercut interlocking channel is the first really new idea in plier design in years. Engineering skill has developed a plier with new patented features which give you the newest, strongest, most practical plier you can buy. Here is a plier that will last for years! Channellock Pliers—made only by Champion DeArment Tool Company, Meadville, Pa.
Send for your Catalog today.
Only CHAMPION DeARMENT makes CHAN NEL LOCK
THE PLIER DESIGN THAT OBSOLETES ALL OTHERS
CHAMPION DeARMENT TOOL CO. • MEADVILLE, PA.
JUNE 1952 247

Champion De Arment embarked on a national advertising program designed to broaden and increase brand preference and market share.

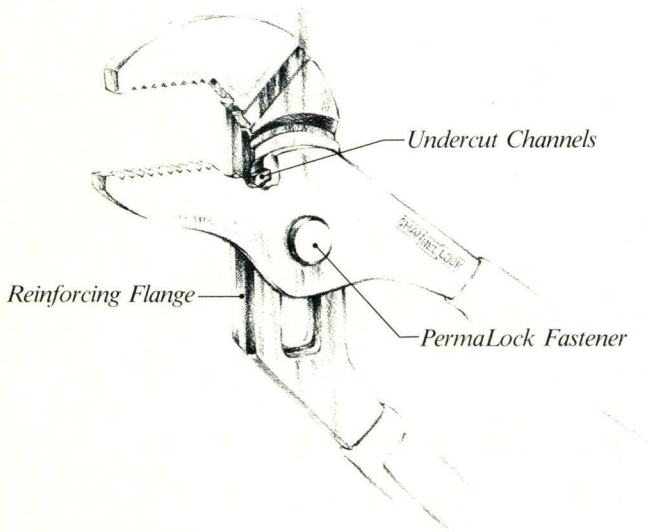
THE THIRD GENERATION TAKES COMMAND

When Almon DeArment died in 1950, his nephews George S. DeArment and William A. DeArment, took command . . . George as president and Bill as vice president-sales.

The brothers were heirs to more than a manufacturing plant and a thriving business. Of far greater importance, as events were soon to prove, was a heritage of unremitting dedication to product improvement begun by grandfather George and expanded in scope by his sons Howard and Almon.

The patent on Channellock tongue-and-groove pliers was due to expire in 1953, thus exposing the company to predatory competitors eagerly waiting to grab big chunks of this market for themselves. They waited in vain. In early 1953, the company unveiled not one but two major improvements in their world renowned Channellock pliers: the undercut tongue and groove design that eliminated all possibility of slippage no matter the pressure applied and the reinforcing flange that eliminated stress breakage. Patents were applied for and granted. The new, improved Channellock tongue-and-groove pliers not only blunted the attack of imitators but led the entire line to new and greater market share.

"In early 1953, the company unveiled not one but two major improvements in their world renowned Channellock pliers."



A NEW NAME FOR THE OLD

In 1964, the trade name Channellock — hitherto reserved for only the tongue and groove pliers — had become so widely and favorably known that it seemed advisable to change the corporation name from Champion DeArment Tool Company to Channellock, Inc. At the same time, the trade name Channellock was applied to the entire line of hand tools. These changes also provided additional protection of the Channellock trademark.

GOOD, BETTER, BEST– NEVER LET IT REST

During the post-war years, continual sales growth led the way to ever improving plant facilities. New forging hammers. Modern heat treating equipment. Improved machining, polishing, and assembly techniques. And plant expansion — again, and again, and then still again. In 1968, the acquisition of Plant No. 2 increased factory capacity to over 200,000 square feet.

William A. DeArment and George S. DeArment examine an old company sales ledger.

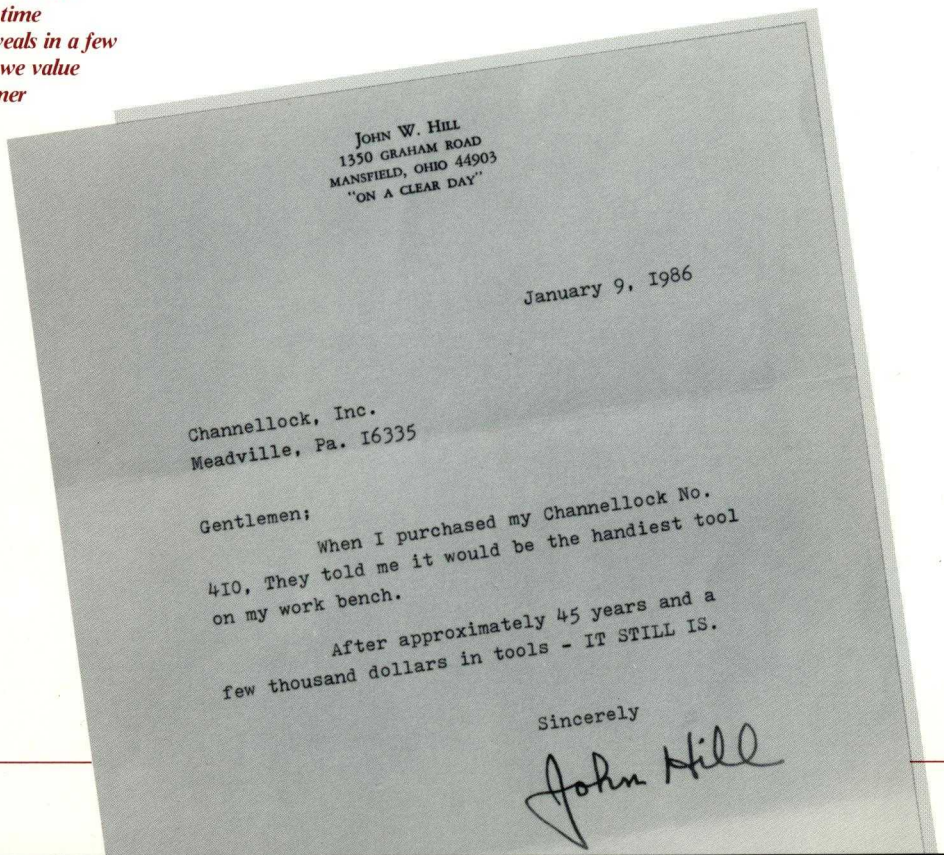
Seated: William S. DeArment, President, and William J. Walsh V.P. Manufacturing
Standing: James R. Stimpson, Secretary/Treasurer Bernard P. Schaffner, V.P. Engineering

In 1980, William S. DeArment moved up from Sales Manager to President. Uncle George and father Bill became Co-Chairmen of the Board. Like all the DeArments, young Bill had cut his eye teeth on a pair of pliers. And like them, he inspired a new, major improvement to the world famous Channellock tongue-and-groove pliers — the bread and butter items in the line. A new, cold-headed fastener provides greater strength, greater safety, longer life, and smoother joint action than the staked bolt formerly used. The new fastener was awarded a patent and registered under the tradename PermaLock. Better tools to work with. The idea that started the company, that spurred its growth, that directs its future.

POSTSCRIPT FOR A D-DAY VETERAN

The Channellock tongue-and-groove plier which British sailor George H. Perkins found on a Normandy beach on June 7, 1944 and which he later broke in civilian use was replaced at no charge by Bill DeArment in response to the letter which opened this story. The result: George Perkins became a friend of Channellock for life.

This unsolicited letter from a long time customer reveals in a few words what we value most: customer satisfaction.



JOHN W. HILL
1350 GRAHAM ROAD
MANSFIELD, OHIO 44903
"ON A CLEAR DAY"

January 9, 1986

Channellock, Inc.
Meadville, Pa. 16335

Gentlemen;

When I purchased my Channellock No. 410, They told me it would be the handiest tool on my work bench.

After approximately 45 years and a few thousand dollars in tools - IT STILL IS.

Sincerely

John Hill

The Lengthened Shadow Of A Man

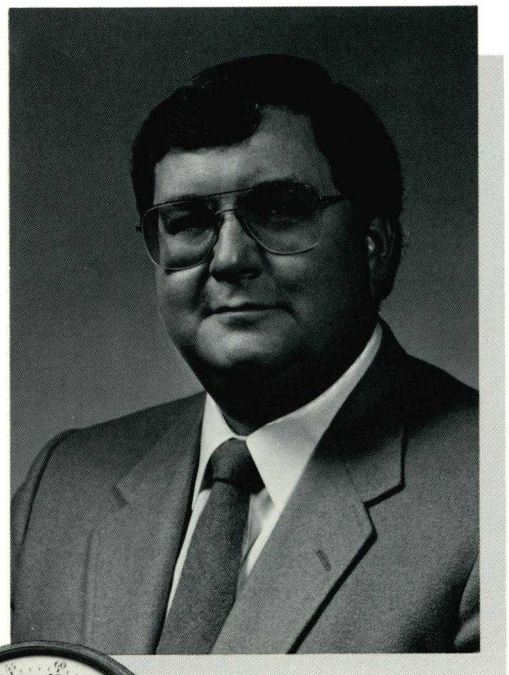
Ralph Waldo Emerson observed that a successful enterprise is the lengthened shadow of a man. The shadow of founder George DeArment still leads the way in spirit for the little company he founded in his blacksmith shop a century ago. His basic tenets still prevail at Channellock: that good management is never far from the factory floor; that bigger does not always mean better; that people count more than machines; that dedication to excellence is the surest way to surmount adversity and to prosper; and most important of all, that our greatest asset does not appear on the balance sheet: our customers.

It is in this spirit that we begin our second century with quiet confidence.

Sincerely,

W. S. DeArment

William S. DeArment, President
Channellock, Inc.



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